

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

14-139 Orleans B EAS.160
NRDIS 1999

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town/City: EASTHAM

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Eastham Center

Photograph



Address: 279 Samoset Road

Historic Name: Higgins Outbuilding

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Outbuilding

Date of Construction: ca. 1920

Source: Assessor, Eastham Tax Commitment records

Style/Form: No Style

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Unknown

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Small shed

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Rear additions (late-20th c.), new windows, doors, sliding glass door (dates unknown)

Condition: Good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.46 acres

Setting: This property is located within the Eastham Center National Register District. The parcel is on the south side of Samoset Road across the street from Depot Pond, and is bordered by Windmill Lane to the east. The surrounding area includes a mix of mid-19th to mid-20th century houses, a church, and library, most set close to the street. This house is set back from the street on a slight rise, and the parcel is left forested in front of the street, obscuring the house from view.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant, for

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): April 2025

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

EASTHAM

279 SAMOSET ROAD

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

This building appears to have begun as an outbuilding that was converted to a dwelling between 1959 and 1961 (see Historical Narrative below). If this is accurate, the original outbuilding was likely the front section of the current building with its gable roof with projecting eaves and exposed rafter tails – a common detail for early-20th century construction. After its conversion to a dwelling, it now is similar in form to a Full Cape, with the west elevation having the five-bay configuration with centered entrance typical of Full Capes. Windows and doors are all modern replacements, and rear ells/additions were built sometime in the late-20th century.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

This house is located within the Eastham Center National Register District - a small, semi-rural village cluster located near the town's geographic center. Incorporated as Nauset Plantation in 1646, and changed to Eastham in 1651, Eastham territory originally extended south to Pleasant Bay and north beyond Wellfleet Harbor. The early development pattern for what we now know as Eastham was impacted by its absence of deep-water harbor facilities. Relatively fertile soil led to dispersed agricultural settlement, but residential and commercial development was concentrated to the north at Wellfleet Harbor and to the south at Town Cove and Pleasant Bay. When the separate towns of Wellfleet and Orleans were created in the late-18th century, Eastham became and remained one of the least populated towns on the Cape throughout the 19th century.

In the 19th century, Eastham was the agricultural center of the Outer Cape. Crops evolved over time; corn and dairy were surpassed in the early-20th century by asparagus and turnips - two crops well suited for the sandy soil. In 1900, 58% of Eastham's workers were employed as farmers, but by 1930 that number had dwindled to 21%. Summer resort development, including cottage colonies and subdivisions of former farmland that would transform Eastham, had begun in earnest in the 1920s as middle-class access to car ownership increased and Cape roads were improved.

This house has an Assessor date of 1920. It very likely began as an outbuilding, so it is difficult to definitively date the building, and it was not until after 1959 that it was converted to a dwelling. This parcel was originally connected to a 3 ¾ acre parcel that stretched west to Bridge Street and included the 1885 Capt. Eldad Higgins House and Carriage House at 295 Samoset Road (EAS.72) and 285 Samoset Road (EAS.161) respectively. In April, 1920 Wallace Higgins, a power company purchasing agent in Pennsylvania, sold 295 Samoset Road, including the land on which this house stands, to widow Tamson Addie Nickerson of Eastham.¹ She had acquired an adjacent third of an acre from William Henry Nickerson in 1913 (what is now 315 Samoset Road, EAS.1314). The Form B for 295 Samoset Road provides the following information about Tamson Nickerson:

Tamson A. Clark Nickerson (1873-1945) was the widow of another, nearly contemporary William H. Nickerson in Eastham - William Horton Nickerson (1867-1912), the son of Nathan B. and Phebe Horton Nickerson. The daughter of John A. and Tamson Clark, she had married in 1892 and had five children—Alta H., Irma C., Susan H., Abigail F., and Nathan A. - between 1892 and 1904. By 1920 she was living in this Samoset Road house with her youngest children, Abby and Nathan, and running an asparagus farm. Eastham tax records for 1926 credited her with the house, valued at \$2000, a barn, an outbuilding, a poultry house, her 3.75-acre homestead lot, and 16.5 acres in other parcels throughout town. By 1930 both children had moved out, and Tamson Nickerson (Addie T. in that year's census) was Eastham's postmaster; in 1937 the town taxed her on a "post office" valued at \$150 along with her house, a second house, two garages, an

¹ Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 361/ Page 549.

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outbuilding, a water system, and nearly 30 acres. At that time she shared 295 Samoset Road with two young children, Robert and Eleanor Pierson, who still lived with her in 1940.

In 1940, Tamson sold the eastern portion of her property to her son, Nathan A. Nickerson, including what is now 29 and 285 Samoset Road.² Nathan Atwood Nickerson (1903-1971) married Avis Evelyn Briggs (1902-1990) in 1924 in Brewster. By the 1930 census they were living in Eastham next to his mother, and he was working as a road surveyor, a job he held through the 1950 census.

In August of 1959, Nathan Nickerson sold the parcel to Elnathan E. Eldredge of Eastham.³ In November of 1959, Eldredge recorded a subdivision of the parcel into 4 lots with this building, then shown as an outbuilding, on Lot 4 (Figure 2).⁴ The cross on the building indicates an outbuilding, not a hip roof. This property was likely purchased as an investment. Elnathan Edwin Eldredge, Jr. (1897-1977) was born in Orleans, the son of a cranberry grower. He also worked as a cranberry grower, and in 1929 purchased 56± acres of marsh and cranberry swamp at the end of North Sunken Meadow Road. Based on census records through 1940, he was living in Orleans. By 1950, however, he was living on Sunken Meadow Road with his second wife, Emma Frances (Snow), whom he married in 1949, and he was working in real estate sales and rentals.

In 1961, Elnathan sold this Lot 4 to Maude F. Woodbury, then living at Smith College in Northampton, MA.⁵ Maude Woodbury (1908-2004) was born in Chatham, Canada to George and Ellen (Terry) Woodbury. She lived in Agawam, MA until her husband Lewis' death in 1957, after which she moved to Northampton and served as a house director at Smith College. It is unknown if Elnathan Eldredge converted this outbuilding into a summer cottage before he sold it to Maude Woodbury or whether she had contracted the work herself.

In 1964, she sold this property to Margaret H. Steinbacher of Shrewsbury, MA.⁶ It was inherited by Louise H. Dennison, and she was living in this house in 1978 when she sold it to Stefan P. Galazzi of Orleans.⁷ The next year, Galazzi sold it to William K. Baker of Orleans.⁸ The house remains in the Baker family.

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² Book 564/ Page 388.

³ Book 1053/ Page 204. Elnathan Eldredge had also bought and sold numerous cottage lots near Campground Road in the early 1950s.

⁴ Plan Book 152/ Page 145.

⁵ Book 1108/ Page 395.

⁶ Book 1263/ Page 402.

⁷ Book 2753/ Page 87.

⁸ Book 3000/ Page 155.

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